



ST. NICHOLAS CATHOLIC CHURCH

Summary of Survey Results

The We Walk by Faith Survey was taken at St. Nicholas Parish last year following a season of Neighborhood Gatherings and brief presentations at Masses on the four elements of **Word, Worship, Community and Service**. The survey responses were sent to the Diocese for tabulation and a report was returned to the Parish. Overall, the Survey revealed that the majority of parishioners “strongly agree” or “agree” that St. Nicholas achieves the Stewardship Way of Life. Individual comments on the survey forms were generally either positive or critical in a constructive way. These responses will serve the Pastoral Council well into the future for determining goals and priorities for the Parish. The following summary is provided to give a synopsis of the responses in each of the four elements, and the pie charts reflect the actual percentages:

Word. In this category, more than 93% of our parishioners agreed that “The Word is proclaimed here in a way that helps me to know and love Jesus.” Adult formation programs, in the context of educating Catholics and welcoming new ones, are more numerous and engaging. One comment, however, reveals a potentially serious issue for all elements of education: “*Adult Formation classes need to teach Church teachings and clarify when the instructors are talking about their personal opinions.*” As for our youth formation programs, responses were very positive. Since 45% of parishioners are over 60 years old, the “Don’t Know” responses were at 20-25% in this category. While some were concerned about too much reliance on volunteers, the Family Faith programs, Antioch retreats and other youth programs received high marks.

Worship. Overall, parishioners love our liturgies, especially after returning from other parishes. Not surprisingly, the music ministry received over 93% in positive responses (although some felt that the use of bongo drums should be re-evaluated). Homilies received generally positive reviews, with appreciation for the cerebral, educational approach to sermons from Msgr. Barton (described by one as a “gifted homilist” and academically stimulating). Others were less charitable. Many negative comments lamented the loss of time-honored traditions in certain liturgies (baptisms, weddings) and the absence of the richness of liturgical art; others noted that the chapel is very warm and feels “sacred.”

Community. The majority of parishioners recognized the programs and opportunities supporting Fellowship in the Parish and on an Inter-faith basis. Respondents wrote that they love the welcoming, warm parishioners here, and they have formed lifelong friendships through their shared faith experience. Pancake breakfasts, Lenten suppers, Bible study groups, Just Seniors, LARCUM, holiday parties and Fall Flings all got positive mention. Ecumenism was also a source of pride, noting that Msgr. Barton had gained great respect among area churches for his efforts to bring Christians together in mutual understanding

Service. Outreach to the local community was acknowledged as one of the strengths of our Justice and Peace committee, and most were aware of the many programs organized within our Parish, especially the homeless shelter, A.A, and N.A. We enjoy a reputation of generosity due to the Jubilee Fund and the work of our Parish ambassadors, whether in the soup kitchen, the hospital and jail ministries, the choirs and folk group, support for Habitat for Humanity, Appalachia, emergency assistance monies or holiday meals. We also support advocacy of Catholic issues in the legislature. We need to encourage young men to consider the priesthood or young women to think about religious orders at some level.

Summary. The next, and final, formal step in the We Walk By Faith process is to plan for Bishop DiLorenzo's visit to St. Nicholas on April 19, 2009. One purpose of the Bishop's visit will be to enable him to focus on our Parish, our self-evaluation and our concerns for improvement from the Diocesan level. The Survey results will also be used in the context of the Diocesan Long-Range Planning Committee's work to determine our strengths and challenges for serving the Roman Catholic community in Virginia Beach.

The Neighborhood Gatherings brought us together to share experiences at St. Nicholas and to promote the Stewardship Way of Life. The We Walk by Faith Survey from the Diocese became a year-long labor of love (for our Parish) on the part of the Stewardship Committee, Pastoral Council and several in the Parish Office to bring it all together. Happily, the Survey results tell us that we appreciate the ways in which we celebrate our Faith in Word, Worship, Community and Service, and we have reason to rejoice in the many ways in which our faith community at St. Nicholas helps us all to Walk by Faith with each other and with our Lord.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin B. Rack, Chairman
Stewardship Committee

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